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The *déjà vu* and the authentic in anglophone culture: contacts, frictions, clashes

Administration
Université de Strasbourg
5 allée du Général Rouvillois – CS 50008
FR-67083 Strasbourg Cedex
Tél. : 00 33 (0)3 68 85 62 65
pu-strasbourg@unistra.fr

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"The musical confusion of hounds and echoes in conjunction": Intertextual friction in Elizabethan rewritings of the myth of Actæon

Rémi Vuillemin ♦

In his work entitled *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, Thomas M. Greene makes a distinction between several types of literary imitation in the Renaissance,[1] one of which he calls "eclectic imitation":

> allusions, echoes, phrases, and images from a large number of authors jostle each other indifferently. […] We might call this type eclectic or exploitative, since it essentially treats all traditions as stockpiles to be drawn upon ostensibly at random. History becomes a vast container whose contents can be disarranged endlessly without suffering damage. (Greene 39)

Allusions and echoes are combined and isolated from their original context and only take significance in the new way in which they are used. Any recognition of the origin of these elements will only advertise the author's knowledge of his or her predecessors' works. This is to be contrasted with another type of imitation that Greene calls "heuristic":

♦ Rémi Vuillemin, *SEARCH, Strasbourg*.

1 Greene lists four different kinds of imitation: sacramental (in which the text manifests its reverence towards its origin), eclectic, heuristic and dialectical (in which the text criticizes its subtexts while at the same time submitting itself to their destructive influence). See Greene 37-45.

> Heuristic imitations come to us advertising their derivation from the subtexts they carry with them, but having done that, they proceed to distance themselves from the subtexts and force us to recognize the poetic distance traversed. […] In all these cases, the informed reader notes the allusion but he notes simultaneously the gulf in the language, in sensibility, in cultural context, in world view, and in moral style. (Greene 40-41)

This distinction is important in itself, but it also has deep implications. According to Greene, eclectic imitation "could not mediate effectively between a past and a future if the past was fragmented, jumbled, in effect dehistoricized" (Greene 40). Heuristic imitation, on the other hand, allows the text to emphasize its historical dimension by pointing towards the creative use and manipulation of a source.

The aim of this article is not to question Greene's typology, which is certainly very useful and lays sturdy foundations for the study of Renaissance imitation, but rather to qualify and fine-tune it. More specifically, my argument is that determining whether a specific instance of imitation is "eclectic" or "heuristic" is not always easy, and that this difficulty often originates in a process of "friction" between the text and the intertext. The term "friction" comes from the field of physics, and two dimensions of the concept can be retained here. First, "friction" implies a contact between two surfaces that move in different directions, and resistance to that movement. Second, this resistance to movement produces exchanges between the atoms of the two surfaces. My assumption is therefore that the term "friction" could be used to point to the process through which mismatched elements are put together creatively. When references to one or several previously written text(s) are inserted in a literary piece in an unexpected way, for example, the resulting friction generates a set of ambiguities that can produce widely varying interpretations.

Ultimately, therefore, the question that is raised here is about reception. The distinction between eclectic and heuristic imitation is not always easy for the reader to make, and the way texts may trigger one interpretation or another is sometimes more relevant than the opposition between "right" or "false" interpretations. If heuristic imitation implies the author's awareness of the historicity of his/her writing, the reader's interpretation of the text is also the product of his/her own historical background.

The myth of Actæon will serve as a case study. The hunter Actæon saw Diana naked and was consequently punished by the goddess, who transformed him into a stag, in effect condemning him to be devoured by his own hounds (Ovid's *Metamorphoses* III, 131-250). It was, of course, one of the most commonly used myths in the literature of the Renaissance. In Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (23, 147-160), Actæon's dogs represent the lover's desire for Laura, their attack against their master the punishment for his boldness in watching her naked. The story easily lent itself to

moral readings, as Arthur Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses* indicates, by making it an example of intemperance:[2]

> All such as doo in falltring freaks, and hawks, and hounds delyght,
> And dyce, and cards, and for too spend the tyme both day and nyght
> In foule excesse of chamberworke, or too much meate and drink:
> Uppon the piteous storie of Acteon ought to think.
> For theis and theyr adherents bee excessive are in deede
> The dogs that dyly doo devour theyr followers on with speede (Aiii)

Despite the obvious erotic dimension of the myth, it seems clear that the dominant version of in the Elizabethan period was a moralized one; this is also what the sources that explicitly codify the myth indicate. The meaning it took in poetry and drama is of course more open to speculation.

Let it be made clear here that the purpose of this paper is not to offer a new reading of the works under analysis, but to attempt to conceptualize the term "friction." The three different texts that are analyzed here all rely to a more or less obvious extent on the myth: Edmund Spenser's first *Mutabilitie Cantos*, "Amour 35" from Drayton's 1594 love sonnet sequence *Ideas Mirrour* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The unfinished last book of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* comprises two *Mutabilite Cantos*. The story of Diana and Faunus, which constitutes the second half of the first one, is a very obvious case of heuristic imitation. The text advertises its proximity with the myth of Actæon while simultaneously insisting on how it differs from it in lines 45 to 49: "The simple maid did yield to him anone; / And eft him placed where he close might view / That never any saw, save onely one; / Who, for his hire to so foole-hardy dew, / Was of his hounds devour'd in Hunters hew" (stanza 45). These lines refer directly to Actæon, and thereby both insist on the resemblance between the two stories and show their differences. While Actæon comes across Diana by chance, Faunus flatters Molanna, Diana's maid, into helping him to see Diana naked. Then, while Actæon utters a small cry of surprise when seeing Diana naked, Faunus reacts in a much more audible way: "There *Faunus* saw that pleased much his eye, / And made his hart to tickle in his brest, / that for great ioy of some-what he did spy, / He could him not containe in silent rest; / But breaking forth in laughter, loud profest / His foolish thought" (stanza 46). This is therefore a grotesque parody of the original myth, as Faunus cannot refrain from laughing out loud. The rest of the story, that is, the punishment of Faunus, is also conspicuously

2 This is not the only possible lesson to be drawn from the myth. For Natale Conti (*Mythologiae* VI.24) and Abraham Fraunce (*The Third parte of the Countesse of Pembrokes Iuychurch* , 1592, p.43r), the myth teaches the effects of undue curiosity. See Nohrnberg 111-112. I heartily thank Julian B. Lethbridge for his help in tracing references both to Actæon and to Spenser.

different from that of Actæon: the violence that could have been expected is not to be found. Faunus is immediately caught and mocked. He is clad in a deer's skin and pursued by hounds: "But him (according as they had decreed) / With a Deeres-skin they covered, and then chast / With all their hounds that after him did speed; / But he more speedy, from them fled more fast / Then any Deere: so sore him dread aghast" (stanza 52). Once again, Spenser offers a grotesque version of the myth of Actæon: Faunus is not transformed into a deer, but just made to dress like one. He is pursued by Diana's hounds, but escapes them and does not meet the tragic ending of his Ovidian counterpart. The story of Faunus is another less violent, more comic version of the myth of Actæon. The real disaster occurs later, when Diana wrecks the landscape in revenge for her maid Molanna's betrayal.

The allusion to Actæon imposes meaning on the text from the outside. It acts as a foil that shows the specificities of Faunus's story, emphasizing Diana's lack of severity towards Faunus, and, on the contrary, the excessive violence that she exerts on the landscape. The meaning of this insistence has been explained by Andrew Hadfield, who sees the whole Faunus myth as a comment on Elizabeth I's policy in Ireland:

> […] the setting of the debate in Ireland, and the myth of Faunus, the foolish God who sees Diana naked and so drives her away from her favourite holiday island, is full of references to recent events and attaches these to grander themes. Diana is, of course, a figure of Elizabeth […] so that her abandoning Ireland refers to Elizabeth's lack of military aid to the English settlers there […]. The fact that she is naked suggests that Ireland is the place where her masks of power slip away and she needs to act more – rather than less – resolutely. Her curse on Ireland, transforming it from the fairest of the British Isles (vi, 38) to a wilderness where wolves and thieves threaten loyal subjects in the extensive forests there, accurately describes the situation of the English in Ireland as colonists like Spenser saw it. (Hadfield 2001, 138)

I have selected this interpretation not to present it as the definite meaning of the episode, but because it shows most clearly the result of a specific mode of imitation: political interpretations make the historicity of the use of the myth of Actæon particularly obvious. This type of imitation is blatantly "heuristic," according to Greene's terminology, and certainly not eclectic. Following Hadfield's view, the myth of Actæon gives significance to the Faunus story because it points to what should have been, and insists on the fact that the punishment is misplaced. The friction between the text and the intertext acts as a signpost pointing to the political message of the text. Other political readings of this episode also rely on the fact that that this is heuristic imitation, and what ambiguity is left is related to the scope of the imitation. While many critics agree that Diana allegorizes Elizabeth, the question of whom

Faunus might be, for instance, is a more disputed one.[3] Finally, most interpretations or readings of this episode rely on how it differs from its Ovidian intertext, especially by dwelling on the reasons why Faunus is not punished. Supriya Chaudhuri, for instance, insists that Faunus is a figure that is "compelled to participate in eternity." She reaches this conclusion by first remarking that "The Faunus episode, a sequence so profoundly resonant with Ovidian echoes, is remarkable for its evasion of Ovid's direct presence" (187-188).

Any friction between the various interpretations of Faunus's story does not stem from a hesitation between considering this as eclectic or heuristic imitation. It is clearly heuristic, first, because the parallel with Actæon receives a long development, second, because the difference from it appears clearly. Here, Greene's theory is completely appropriate to characterize Spenser's imitation of Ovid.

Things prove more difficult to determine in the case of Drayton's "Amour 35." This poem, taken from the 1594 love sonnet sequence *Ideas Mirrour*, belongs to the tradition of the love-hunt lyric. As not much has been written on this sonnet, I will rely here on my own readings of it.[4]

> See chaste Diana, where my harmless hart,
> Rouz'd from my breast, his sure and safest layre,
> Nor chaste by hounde, nor forc'd by Hunters arte,
> Yet see how right he comes unto my faire.
>
> See how my Deere comes to thy Beauties stand,
> And there stands gazing on those darting eyes,
> Whilst from theyr rayes by Cupids skillfull hand,
> Into his hart the piercing Arrow flyes.
>
> See how hee lookes upon his bleeding wound,
> Whilst thus he panteth for his latest breath,
> And looking on thee, falls upon the ground,
> Smyling, as though he glories in his death.
> And wallowing in his blood, some lyfe yet last,
> His stone-cold lips doth kisse the blessed shaft.

3 See for instance Willy Maley, *Salvaging Spenser: Colonialism, Culture and Identity* (New York, St Martin's Press; London, Macmillan, 1997), Richard A. McCabe, *Spenser's Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference* (Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002), Judith Owens, 'Professing Ireland in the Woods of Spenser's *Mutabilitie*', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 29 (2003),1-22, or, more recently, Thomas Herron, 'Native Irish property and propriety in the Faunus episode and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* in Jane Grogan (ed.), *Celebrating Mutabilitie: Essays on Edmund Spenser's Mutabilitie Cantos*, 136-178.

4 In *The Works of Michael Drayton*, the authors of the notes, Kathleen Tillotson and Bernard H. Newdigate, merely point out the pun between "hart" and "heart," and possible sources such as Desportes, *Les Amours de Diane* II, 73, Watson's *Teares of Fancie*, 49, and Samuel Daniel's *Delia* 5.

The sonnet contains some trademark ingredients of the Petrarchan poem, with commonly-used paronomasia: "hart" (l.1) meaning, of course, "heart".[5] The third line ("nor chased by hounds") clearly refers to the myth of Actæon, but the repeated "nor" discards the reference straight away. The rest of the poem, however, is consistent with the moralized version of the myth, providing an example of punishment for excessive and uncontrolled desire. The myth is not abandoned altogether, as the second stanza recounts the very beginning of the story, when Actæon (here, the hart/heart) sees Diana (the beloved) naked. The narrative is rewritten through the use of Petrarchan *topoi* that are not usually part of Actæon's story, as the sight of Diane naked is replaced by the *topos* of the eyes shooting arrows of love.[6] The third quatrain and the couplet could be interpreted as a figuration of the madness of love, the "error", to paraphrase Petrarch, in which the lover indulges. The sonnet could then be understood as an edifying variation on the myth of Actæon as revisited through Petrarchan *topoi*, a condemnation of unrestrained desire ending with the heart's death. In this perspective, the sonnet could be seen as a combination of references: Actæon on the one hand, Petrarchan *topoi* rewritten through the influence of the Anacreontic ode on the other, uniting to teach a moral lesson. If we choose to read the sonnet that way, we regard the mention of Ovid's myth as little more than eclectic imitation. The text as a whole is in keeping with the message of its source as it was perceived in the late sixteenth-century.

It seems clear, however, that such a reading is not the only possible one. The use of "nor" in the third line, in particular, advertises the text's difference from its source. If the aim of the sonnet were simply to duplicate moralized Ovid, such an advertisement would be rather counterproductive. Therefore, it seems preferable to see the imitation as heuristic here. Two possibly contradictory interpretations could be suggested, which rely on a perception of the imitation of Ovid as a heuristic one. In line 5, the word "deer" (which was one of the spellings of the word "dear" to which Drayton resorts elsewhere to refer to his lady[7]) is used instead of "hart" or "stag," which in effect tends to insist on the heart's harmlessness and its absence of agency. It could even be argued that the heart is somehow implicitly feminized, not only through the use of the word "deer," but also through the ending, which strongly recalls the Ovidian myth of Cephalus and Procris.[8] The lover's heart (Procris) is pierced by a shaft (a Petrarchized version of Cephalus's spear), watched by the lady

5 Both spellings were possible at the time. Here, the choice of "hart" rather than "heart" sustains the pun.

6 The representation of Cupid shooting arrows of love had been incorporated into Petrarchan poetics by French poets influenced by the *Greek Anthology* (and, therefore, the Anacreon's odes) in the course of the sixteenth century.

7 See for instance Amour 13. This will be much more frequent in Drayton's later sequence *Idea.*

8 *Metamorphoses* VII, 661-865.

(Cephalus).[9] The heart "smiles" while dying, "as though he glories in his death," and does not merely show relief as Procris does.

Several elements indicate the possibility that this might be spiritualized, rather than just moralized Ovid. Other sonnets in *Ideas Mirrour* that rely on a more or less obviously neoplatonic intertext,[10] insist on the difficulty in watching the lady-sun (here, an emblem of divinity[11]), and the risk incurred while trying to do so. Why not, therefore, see this sonnet as the description of a death that is actually union with divinity (and, one might argue, the "wound" as a duplication of the wound of Christ, a sort of Petrarchan version of *imitatio Christi*)? Line 10 is strongly reminiscent of Psalm 42, 1: "As the hart panteth ofter the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."[12] To "kisse the blessed shaft" (l.14) could be akin to the biblical "kiss the rod" (the rod of chastisement). Here again, the lover is punished. A *felix culpa* indeed: the punishment is death, in neoplatonic terms, the fusion of the soul with God.[13]

Clearly though, the poem also suggests the possibility of a more erotic reading. In this perspective, the end of the second quatrain is easily understood as an indirect evocation of penetration. This is confirmed by a number of terms that are used in the sestet: "wound" (l.9), "panteth" (l.10), "wallowing" (l.13), or, most obviously, "kisse the blessed shaft" (l.14). In this interpretation, the didactic and moral dimensions of the myth of Actæon are undermined, while its sensuousness is emphasized, a process that is all the more blatant as this sonnet is part of a sequence from which the body and sexuality are conspicuously excluded. The contrast between these two interpretations is a contrast between Ovid not only moralized, but also spiritualized, and erotic Ovid, a direct imitation of the erotic contents of the original, paradoxically recovered through discarding a part of the story.

The concept of "friction" can be understood and deployed in two ways here, for two different processes are at stake. First, there is a striking contrast between a reading that considers that eclectic imitation introduces moralized Ovid (much in keeping with Petrarch), and a contrary reading that picks the textual hints towards heuristic imitation, triggering another interpretation of the sonnet. One must take

9 In Golding's moralized translation of Ovid, the myth of Cephalus and Procris teaches the lesson that married people should avoid jealousy. This does not seem to apply to Drayton's sonnet, except if we consider that the lover tries to show here that he should not have doubted his lady. See Golding Aiiii.

10 See especially sonnets 3, 5, 6 and 25.

11 This image of the lady as a solar divinity is built at the beginning of the sequence (in Amour 1, the lover offers the lady "oblations to [her] sacred name") and deconstructed in the following sonnets, but still pervades the whole work (see Amour 46, in which Idea is "the lively image of divinitie").

12 Interestingly, Psalm 42 expresses the need not to doubt God, which echoes the Ovidian intertext of the Cephalus and Procris myth.

13 For another spiritualized version of Actaeon's story, see Gordiano Bruno's *De gli eroici furori*, dialogo 4.

into account the reception of Ovid at the time to understand that even though the text obviously directs us towards an interpretation of imitation as heuristic, the dominant moral reception of Ovid could lead one to consider the use of the myth to be an eclectic one.

The other friction is not between a perception of imitation as either eclectic or heuristic, but rather a friction between a spiritual or an erotic reading. Again, the reception is determined by its context. To the modern reader, the erotic reading is the first obvious one, and only a patient study of the mythical and biblical references will uncover the other. Not so to the Elizabethan reader, though, who, if he/she could rule out a moral reading of the sonnet, would most probably perceive the potential spiritual meaning as well as the erotic undertones of the poem. The text allows for a considerable amount of ambiguity that is characteristic of many Elizabethan sonnet sequences.[14]

This is the type of process, used by Shakespeare in an at least equally ambiguous way in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, that has sparked heated debates about the significance and the staging of the play. Two opposed visions have dominated the literary criticism of Shakespeare's comedy. Early commentators have insisted upon the light-hearted character of the play. In 1817, William Hazlitt wrote: "the reading of this play is like wandering in a grove by moonlight: the descriptions breathe a sweetness like odours thrown from beds of flowers" (Hazlitt 100).[15] Later in the same century, Wilhelm Oechelhäuser contended that

> in the word parody is the key to the only true comprehension and representation of the *Summernight's Dream*, but observe, there must be no attempt at a mere comic representation of love, least of all at a representation of true, genuine love, but at a *parody of love*. Above all, there is nothing in the whole play which is to be taken seriously; *every* action and situation in it is a parody, and *all persons, without exception, heroes as well as lovers, fairies as well as clowns, are exponents of this parody*. (Price 40)

Either a comedy or the parody of one, the play is mostly perceived as a sweet and light-hearted piece of drama meant to arouse mirth or dreaminess above all. A new way of understanding *Midsummer Dream* was ushered in by Jan Kott's widely-known *Shakespeare our Contemporary* in 1965. In this seminal collection of essays, Kott sees Puck as "the devil", "he who, like Harlequin, pulls all the characters on strings. He liberates instincts and puts the mechanism of this world in motion"

14 See Rémi Vuillemin, *Le Recueil pétrarquiste à l'ère du maniérisme: poétique des sonnets de Michael Drayton, 1594-1619*, p. 72-77.

15 Interestingly, Hazlitt later adds that such sweetness does not translate well onstage and does not quite realize that this very fact might give some indications about the play itself.

(Kott 171, 174-175). Kott then complains that "for a long time theatres have been content to present the *Dream* as a brothers Grimm fable, completely obliterating the pungency of the dialogue, and the brutality of the situations" (Kott 175). The debate between the traditional vision of the play as a light-hearted piece of comedy and Kott's much darker account of it as an encounter between "Eros and Thanatos" (Kott 179) has been a long-drawn-out one, and more recent critics have repeatedly tried to reach a middle-ground between those two contrasted interpretations.[16] Along with other references and literary strategies, the allusions to the story of Actæon have contributed to producing those hesitations.

Arguably, the presence of the myth in Shakespeare's comedy is far less obvious than in the two previous examples studied in this article. While Spenser's and Drayton's texts rely heavily, if somewhat indirectly, on the Ovidian story, Shakespeare combines it with several other myths related to the love hunt or to stories in which love ends tragically. One such example is, of course, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, which the mechanicals rehearse and act in their own peculiar way in the final play within the play. In the background of the play might also be the myth of Hippolytus, the son issued from Theseus's first marriage to the Queen of the Amazons.[17] This story, alluding to incest, rape and ending with the death of the two main protagonists, could convey some of its darkest undertones to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Of course, the myth is not mentioned in it, but Shakespeare's choice of the name of

16 See for instance Mary Z. Maher, who affirms that "the text of the play can support Romantic Comedy, Dark Comedy, and perhaps Black Comedy, but it does not support emptying the play of its basis in humor" (446). The most recent papers have repeatedly focused on sexuality. See Bruce Boehrer, "Economies of Desire in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Studies* 32 (2004), p. 99-117; Gabriel Riegler, "'I Woo'd Thee with My Sword,/And Won Thy Love Doing Thee Injuries': The Erotic Economies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Upstart Crow: A Shakespeare Journal* 28 (2008-2009), p. 70-81; Melissa E. Sanchez, "'Use Me But as Your Spaniel': Feminism, Queer Theory, and Early Modern Sexualities," *PMLA* 127.3 (2012), p. 493-511. Elisabeth Bronfen interestingly reads the *Dream* by confronting it with David Cronenberg's film *History of Violence* (2005) and therefore provides a good example of the reader's background influences the comprehension of the play ("Extimate Violence: Shakespeare's Night World," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 143 (2007), p. 132-46). For other approaches, see most notably A. B. Taylor, "Ovid's Myths and the Unsmooth Course of Love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," Charles Martindale & A.B. Taylor eds., *Shakespeare and the Classics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) p. 49-65. Taylor contends that the version of the *Metamorphoses* that dominates in the play is Golding's moralized Ovid. See also Erica Birrell, "A Midsummer Night's Symposium: Translating Platonic Love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," Liz Oakley-Brown ed., *Shakespeare and the Translation of Identity in Early Modern England* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2011) p. 46-73.

17 While Theseus is out hunting, Phaedra, his second wife, attempts to seduce Hippolytus, to no avail. Rejected, she accuses her stepson of trying to rape her, and Theseus punishes his son, asking his father Poseidon to avenge him. Pursued by a sea-monster that terrorizes his horses, Hippolytus falls off his chariot and is dragged by his horses to death. Phaedra commits suicide when she realizes what she has done. See Seneca's *Phaedra*, or a slightly different version of the myth in Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

Hippolyta rather than that of Antiopa[18] might be a reminder of the tragedy to come. Finally, the hunt is also the moment when Aeneas falls in love with Dido, starting another love story that will not end well.[19]

Of more direct interest to us are the Ovidian myths of Apollo and Daphne on the one hand, Venus and Adonis on the other, which appear in act II scene 1 lines 230-234, since they tell stories of love hunts and of rape and violence. Helena says to Demetrius: "Run when you will. The story shall be changed:/ Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase. / The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind / Makes speed to catch the tiger: bootless speed, / When cowardice pursues, and valour flies." The reversal of the hunter and the hunted does not cancel out the potential violence that is at stake here. In particular, it echoes Demetrius's previous cue: "I'll run from thee, and hide me in the brakes, / And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts." (II. ii. 227-228). Only a brief hint is made to the myth of Actæon during the love chase that takes place in acts II, III and IV, and mostly relies on the dog motive : if Helena calls herself a "spaniel" (II.i.203), in act III.2.64, it is Demetrius who wants to give Lysander's carcass to his hounds. Only the mention of Theseus' hounds, however, clearly recalls undertones of the Actæon myth: "My love shall hear the music of my hounds. /[…] We will, fair Queen, up to the mountain's top, / And mark the musical confusion / Of hounds and echo in conjunction." (IV.i.105, 109-110). Two myths spring to mind immediately: that of Narcissus (who is chased by the nymph Echo) on the one hand and that of Actæon on the other hand. The potential effect is – quite literally – to echo other references[20] to tragic love stories in the preceding scenes, and, more generally, to a violence that is repeatedly suggested or implied but never realized[21]. Combined with those references, the barking of the dogs recalls Actæon's doom, suggesting the possibility of death.[22] What appears to be significant here is not so much the allusion to the myth of Actæon itself as its combination with a number of other references. The fact that the cries of the hounds announce the end of the chase cancels out the potential violence and the potential disaster that might have happened in the woods. As Francis Guinle writes,

18 See Peter Holland's introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* p. 49.

19 See Virgil's *Eneid* (IV) and Marlowe's *Dido Queen of Carthage* (IV.ii, iii and iv).

20 See especially Theseus's wooing of Hippolyta (I.1.16-17), and the allusions to Pyramus and Thisbe (I.1.163-168, I.1.209-213, scene I.ii, scene III.1.) and Dido and Aeneas (I.1.174-175).

21 See I.1.141-149, allusions to Ariadne and mazes (II.1.80, II.1.99, II.1.113), II.1.135, II.1.190, II.1.196, II.1.244, the enumeration of the dangers of the forest while Titania sleeps (II.ii.9-23), II.ii.90, II.ii.107, II.ii.112-113, II.ii.151-162, III.ii.26-28, III.ii.46-76, III.ii.243-244, III.ii.269, III.ii.312-313, III.ii.364-365, III.ii.379-387. It is because many of these allusions are part of a very codified language of love that it is difficult to decide whether they should be considered in isolation or as a network, in which case they are much more likely to prompt interpretations such as Kott's.

22 Alluding to violence while at the same time not letting that violence happen is a clear pattern that forms part of the whole play's overall structure.

> A process of cancellation of what is unbearable occurs through a series of inversions and metamorphoses. Tonalities such as that of violence, which are set aside at the beginning ("But I will wed thee in another key" – I.i.8), are reactivated in the course of the play, especially following the lovers' quarrel which leads to the verbal duel between Demetrius and Lysander. This violent tonality is unbearable, and it is set aside, as is the transgression of the fleeing lovers, which threatens to contaminate the whole play. (Guinle 121, my translation)[23]

It is clear, however, that the undertones remain. The problem for the spectator or the reader, therefore, is to find "the concord of this discord," the harmony in such a set of dissonances.

While this could seem to be a case of Greene's "eclectic imitation," the interplay of the repeated allusions to love-hunt myths proves to be more elaborate than merely a way of displaying the playwright's knowledge of the classics. The myths and references to classical lore are mentioned in passing, but take part in an interweaving of stories, an inter- and intratextual network that contributes to determining the reception of the play. Interestingly, Greene also calls eclectic imitation "*contaminatio*" (Greene 39): the text, in other words, is contaminated by bits and pieces from other stories and other texts. The contamination that might be effected here is of another sort. It is the progressive combination of references with the text, and with one-another, that allows an interpretation focusing on the dangers of desire to take shape. This set of intratextual echoes is reminiscent of what Neil Fraistat called "contexture" in poem collections: "the contextuality provided for each poem by the larger frame within which it is placed, the intertextuality among poems so placed, and the resultant texture of resonance and meanings" (Fraistat 3). Such effects can also be achieved in the playhouse, provided that the staging favours them.

The play remains, however, a comedy. The love games of the lovers are interspersed with burlesque passages, namely the rehearsals of the mechanicals. The scenes with the fairies are generally light-hearted, though troublesome characters like Puck might occasionally appear as frightful[24]. Finally, and this is perhaps the most important point, the rapid rhythm of the exchanges of the lovers, which might convey a certain sense of violence (see for instance the use of stichomythia in II.1.212-213) does

23 "Un processus d'élimination de l'intolérable se met en place par le jeu des renversements et des métamorphoses. Ainsi, certaines tonalités, comme celles de la violence écartée au début de la pièce ("But I will wed thee in another key" – I.i.8), ressurgissent au cours de la pièce, en particulier à la suite de la querelle des amants qui conduit à un duel entre Demetrius et Lysander. Cette tonalité de la violence, intolérable, est écartée, tout comme l'est la tonalité intolérable de la transgression induite par la fuite des amants, et qui menace d'envahir tous les domaines" (Guinle 121).

24 Puck's role often seems to remind one of potential dangers that are kept at bay. See II.1.32-4, or more interestingly V.i.362-381.

not necessarily lead the spectator to dwell on the allusions to death or to violence, especially as he/she realizes that all the exchanges originate in mistakes and quid pro quos (see III.ii). It is therefore ultimately the choices made for the staging of the play, added of course to the cultural background of the spectator, that will allow one aspect of the text or the other to stand out during the performance.

A rather recent production of the play – one that was reputedly controversial – can illustrate this point: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was staged by Richard Jones for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2002. The reception of this production was summed up by the *Daily Telegraph* of March 11th 2002 in the following words "In February, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Richard Jones, opens in Stratford to the worst set of reviews in 20 years" (Cavendish). This was very much a *Shakespeare our contemporary* staging, focusing on violence, desire and sexuality, with practically naked actors and gothic fairies. It also seemed that Jones wanted to convey a sense of unhealthy contamination, as – quite repulsive – giant flies progressively invaded one of the stage walls, their numbers multiplying in the course of the play, especially after each transgression of the boundaries between Athens, the forest and the world of the fairies. This production quickly appeared as a comment on the dangers of sexuality which, in the modern world, could also take the form of sexually transmittable diseases. Richard Jones did not need to put too much strain on the text to convey such meaning. It is understandable, however, that his version of the play produced such uproar, as his choice was quite clear-cut and left out the lighter aspects of the play.

It is, among other things, the friction produced by the inclusion of the intertext which produces a range of possible interpretations, a sort of hermeneutic space allowing a certain amount of freedom to stage directors. This space might explain why Jones's production of the *Dream*, despite widespread uproar, was staged at all. In Thomas M. Greene's terms, the intertextual references to the love-hunt in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can be understood as either "eclectic imitation," prompting a vision of the play as a light comedy, or a set of interconnected pieces of "heuristic imitation," which produce a much darker vision of the play.

In these examples, the less obvious the reference to the myth of Actæon, the more friction there is, producing hesitation in interpretation, or in the mode of interpretation one should adopt. Friction could be understood as the process through which the insertion of a subtext within a text opens it to interpretation, depending on the reader's willingness to take into account the details of the said subtext. This also depends on a variety of criteria. For friction to occur, the distance between the literary work and the intertext it uses must be well-adjusted. It also depends on the reading process, which can be partly determined by the text. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for instance, provides the interesting example of a network of references which, taken together, make sense of the underlying presence of the Actæon myth. But this network is not dense enough to ensure that the darker aspects of the play

will perforce be considered. Drayton's text simultaneously alludes to Actæon's story and claims its distance from it, only to return to its possible sexual undertones later. What is retained from the myth largely relies on the reader's cultural background and knowledge of the intertextual references that can be uncovered in the text. In that regard, it is quite similar to Shakespeare's play. Spenser's text, by contrast, is far less ambiguous, not in terms of interpretation, but in terms of mode of interpretation, presumably because the parallel with the myth of Actæon is extensive. In the field of physics, this would be a case of "adherence," not of friction. The poem and its intertext are different, but only to direct the reader towards the need to interpret the difference.

Greene's categories are useful, but like all classifications, they tend to produce oversimplifications. In isolating one characteristic of Renaissance literary practice – imitation – Greene's theory does not allow one to consider the complexity of the interplay of intertextual references, especially in case of what he calls eclectic imitation. This is perhaps due to Greene's particular focus on Bloom's "anxiety of influence." Showing the interplay between categories such as "eclectic" and "heuristic" imitation, however, can bring new and interesting considerations. The concept of friction can be fruitful to explore the production of conflicting interpretations, of readings and misreadings, not so much to explain the text as to explain the distance between the explanations of a text. If a great work is, in Umberto Eco's words, an "open work," then friction and dissonance are at the core of the critic's endeavour.

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